

When we trace the Lord's testimony or witness or whatever it is, when we get to the Plymouth Brethren, there is a book entitled *The Torch of the Testimony* by John W. Kennedy. And when that book closes in the year about 1900, the Plymouth Brethren are at one another's throats, and Bob said it really well. They were standing in line to excommunicate one another and one another's churches. Now, I'll tell you something else about the brethren, and that is, if you ever meet with them, it's still the 1880s. Meet them, sit down with them. They are still talking about that fight, and John Kennedy said that in a book that ends in, let's say, 1899. I'm telling you, it's the year 2000, and still, the major thing they talk about is that split. They came to be called the open brothers and the closed brothers, and they'll draw the line with you as soon as you meet them. Are you open or closed? Until this hour. What else would be said? That's where the story ends, right there. That's as far as it gets. **Audience:** We cannot go on, based on good days and bad days, but on the basis of being witnesses to the next generation.

Actually, you left out part of that sentence. To be a witness *to this* and the next generation. Alright, thank you very much. I suppose that pretty well sums it up. Okay. What else? **Audience:** There's more courage in dying than fighting, but it has to be courageous dying. There's more courage in dying than there is in fighting. It's not a cowardly dying...an excuse dying. This is what I wrestle with whenever I talk about this, and maybe we can get a little light on it today: what is it really? What's true dying there? What is that like? Alright, is there anything else? **Audience:** It's difficult to be crucified and strong at the same time.

Yes, it is extremely difficult to be strong and crucified. That's a challenge of challenges. And don't pick your crucifixions. Oh, I like this formula, but I don't like that one. So, I'll take this crucifixion, and instead I'll die to the situation, so I won't have to, well, you don't ever say that part, do you? Or any of us? Okay. Every movement since the Moravians has grown without the cross. It has not been there; I don't care if they preach it. They have not practiced it. And there's no difference between not practicing it and not preaching it. If you preach it and you don't practice it, it's still zero. Okay, is that enough?

If the people in this room don't go on, I am telling you that the next group that comes up to bat comes up to that testimony is going to fight like devils, and I'll tell you why. It's based on what we have paid for and what we've got so far. I don't know of anybody who's ever going to try to pay that price again. In my lifetime, I have not met that soul, or that people, or even got close to it, or could even be in sight of. We will have to build on the foundation we have right now, because God spoke to Moses and said, "You're not going to live much longer." Whatever Moses built on, that's what God inherited. Whatever Paul built on, that's what God inherited. What you and I have built on, we're going to have to build on it, and if there are any cracks in it, we're going to have to either mend them or not have them. One thing we will not do is be what the brethren are, and we have never been what the brethren are. Now, does that pretty well wrap it up? Because that brings us to where we are right now. I'm going to ask again that when you decide to do this, I don't care how dark, you're going to have to learn to eat death and live on it. That's what you're going to have to do, because we can't always be starry-eyed. We've got to understand that we are here to exist. Not

to be entertained, not to even be spiritual. We're just digging in our heels and saying, "We're here." Until the Lord moves, he blesses us, or if He removes His blessing, we are here till somebody walks through that door and says, "I don't know who you people are, but tell us your story." That's what we will do. We will stay here until someone walks through that door and says, "We want to go on. Tell us your story." And when you do, tell them to listen to this morning's message and tonight's, and I saw someone back there.

Audience: The last two things I wrote down were that we would rather fail at this than succeed at something else. And the other thing is that you pray for a cloud of witnesses more interested in what is going on here.

Okay, it is more important, and it is better to fail here than it is to succeed anywhere else, because God's got everything else at a dime a dozen. What is God for His testimony? It was never like that. It's usually small and very hidden, so let's get ready to fail and eat it for breakfast.

I think I can promise you, if I know something about the ways of God, that someday somebody's going to walk through that door. He'll hear what you have to say, and you better be clear about what you say of what you've done, and what we are, and what our testimony is to this generation, and to the generation to come, and to this cloud of witness. No. According to Hebrews, there is a cloud of witnesses. I don't think they are the least bit interested in... YWAM. Well, I don't think they're the least bit interested in all those Pentecostal programs on television, etc., etc., etc. No, that cloud of witnesses became who they were by being very similar to what we are, and what others are, and those who have joined that cloud of witnesses were a witness, and we call the Lord forth today and say Lord, witness us, and if we fail, it wasn't because we didn't try.

Okay, I think that wraps it up. Now, I want to tell you what the name of this message is: *The Present State of the Lord's Testimony* on this earth today, starting with the Plymouth Brethren. I want to apologize to every person in this room, but what I'm about to say, everything I'm about to say...but would you look at my face for a moment, please...and will you look at my head? Would you look at my brow, and the furrows that are there? Will you listen to my voice? If I don't tell this story, it'll die with me. Will you please give me the honor I have waited until this day for, with one and a half feet in the grave, before I have ever told this story? Others have told their story before they died. I'm going to tell the story of the present state of the Lord's testimony in the world today, and it's not pretty. As far as I'm concerned, the decency of His testimony died with the last Moravian, real Moravian, not the Moravians today, but whenever they died. In other words, I'm saying from about 1900 on, no, from about 1830 on till right now, we haven't had a testimony worth passing on.

Now, the interesting part of this is that somewhere along here in this story, I get caught up in that story. I'm part of it. Now, to whatever degree is not important; the point is, I'm present in that story, and I have to give my testimony. And your ears are going to rot off before we get through this. Grown men will weep, but it's nonetheless accurate. Now, here's the nice thing about it, and that is, the Lord gave me the mind of a historian. Aren't you glad He didn't give me the mind of a

theologian? Aren't you glad he didn't give me the mind of a Bible teacher? All I can do is tell stories so that I will tell a story, and we'll bring it up to the year 2000. The pages after that are blank. Maybe I should show this chart again. I think this thing cost us \$4. That's because it was run through a color copier, took two pages, and cost \$2 each. We have 50 put together charts. If you don't have one, and you have \$4, you are going to pay for that.

Brother John W. Kennedy ended right there. We have added this. I'm going to start telling the story right around 1820. This conference is about this blank space right over here. We're on the stage. We may be so small in number that you can't find us on this page, but we're on it. And the question is: where do we go from here?

Okay, I'm going to read a passage of scripture, and if anybody in this room has ever heard this passage before...Have you ever run across something in the Bible you absolutely never heard of in your life? I never saw this in my life. It is Jeremiah 47:6-7, and these are my feelings about this day right there. This is my text. *Oh, sword of the Lord, when will you be at rest again? Go back into your sheath. Rest and be still. But how can that sword be still when the Lord has given it a charge?* And although I regret everything I'm going to say, put it in history books.

It's about 1820, in a town called Plymouth, and two men are holding forth. They have preached the greatest messages ever preached. You have heard of them, whether you know it or not, and if you have ever lived outside the institutional church anywhere, you have heard those messages. Where are you, Mike Broadie? Will you please raise your hand? Mike, they are what you and I heard, updated. They preached about the church, and then turned right around and denied its existence, totally. They preached on the cross, and they never practiced it. I said to brother Bob yesterday, and I'll say it again: scratch one of them and they'll rip you to shreds.

We're going to keep going here. I'm talking about the Plymouth Brethren; I haven't even warmed up. I've been told that they've divided more than any other denomination on the face of the earth. They fought with one another like cats and dogs. The cruelty that they have shown toward one another is unspeakable. The damage that they have inflicted on one another is unspeakable, and the carnage that they have wrecked upon the kingdom of God is at least undeniable. John W. Kennedy's book ends by saying essentially what Bob said: they were standing in line to excommunicate one another. It is the craziest story. It was a battle between Newton and the Newtonites, and the Darbyites, with all sorts of people over here whose names are legendary. I'm not going to bother talking about them. I do think you would be wise to get that book and read the last chapter.

Isn't it crazy? They tell me that John Darby, before he died, said the most godly man I ever knew in my life was Newton. Make sense of that; Newton was excommunicated. That's not what they did that was so terrible. What they did, for the first time, was to introduce gimmicks and sleight of hand into the kingdom of God. You want to hear it? First of all, I want to go back to this thing of preaching so beautifully about the true church, then turning around and denying it. John Darby and

those others preached on the church and then turned around and said there are seven dispensations of the church, and the last one, the seventh one, is the age of the Laodiceans, which is an apostate church that cannot be redeemed, and God is through with the church. The brethren don't believe the church can be helped in any way. It is forever in an apostate state. That teaching has gotten into institutional Christianity, and it is the very reason why you will not find the church being stood for by men and women in this generation, because the aroma of that teaching still exists. The church is the way it is, and we'll go on with it. No effort whatsoever to go back to first things. Now that's saying the church, and taking away the church.

Now they brought in something else, and that was a teaching of the Philadelphia church, which was the, somebody tell me what number is the Philadelphia church. It's the sixth. I thought it was, but that's a little late to be having a Philadelphia church. Okay. So, we are going to be the Philadelphia church, the church of brotherly love. Well, they never made the church of brotherly love. Now, here are their gimmicks. One, we have never read anything or studied anything from anybody. We have read only the word of God. That's a lie. They had influence everywhere, but they used it to bring people into the Brethren, and they are still using it today. People are still joining them because of that. They have a term, and if you ever hear that term, you run as fast as you can. We only teach the pure word of God. Well, my personal experience is that they don't even get close to the pure word of God. I apologize, but this sword is about to be sheathed, and just before it is, it's going to speak as to the present status of God's testimony on this earth. Furthermore, I have earned this right.

Now, when they began doing that, and people began noticing they were growing, then I give you a principle: anytime anyone does anything successful in the Christian religion, somebody else is going to mimic it because it works. At the same time, we see the birth of Pentecostalism. It's hard to set a date for the birth of Pentecostalism worldwide, but I want to speak to my resident historian here, brother Matt. Would I be correct in saying it more or less began with the Welsh revival? Thank you, Matt's really gracious. He's British, you know. So, they came up with some gimmicks, too. One of them is: God wants to restore the gifts. Look at me; look at how old I am, and people still try this on me: what God wants to do is restore the gifts. Well, I'll tell you something, folks. I'd rather see him restore the church, not healing and power and all of these things.

In the United States, back in the early part of the 20th century, there was a place called Bonnie Brae, and they moved to Azusa Street, so we hear about the Azusa Street revival. I want to give a brief interpretation of Gene Edwards's account of what happened on Azusa Street. What really happened at Azusa Street is a book. I will tell you what I think happened at Azusa Street: I think those people began experiencing church life, and blamed it on tongues. Read the story sometime and see if it's not as clear as it can be. Those people began to understand the experience of the church, and then they turned it into the Pentecostal movement. Many Pentecostals believe they're part of non-institutional Christianity, but I could not name one on this earth today. There came into our country out of the Azusa revival, the Pentecostal revival, something called the "latter rain".

Has anybody here ever heard of it? You've heard of it. The latter rain, I believe, founded the Rema Bible school in some place. Is that correct? That is correct. Okay. It still exists.

Out of the latter rain, which was really going, folks, that thing was plowing up the earth; that was exciting. I've never been in the latter rain, but I saw one of their meetings when I was a young kid. Wow! Out of that came Sam Fife and The Move. Now, here's what Sam did...Lord, are you going to forgive me for doing this to God's people? Forgive me, Lord, but I'm going to put it on record, even if it costs my life...it's going to cost my life anyway.

We've come to the latter rain, and we are the overcomers. Number one, we, The Move, are the overcomers. Two, if we live righteous lives, we will live forever and not die. Now, I think most of you have never heard of that one. A lot of you never even heard of that. Well, then you see how far behind you are. I want to poke fun at Sam Fife by saying he died...but that's not fair...he was killed in an airplane crash, so I don't know if that was part of their theology or not.

The Brethren and The Move. I'm sorry, we need to go back to the Brethren again. The Brethren came up with the doctrine of the overcomers, and we are the overcomers, and they spread that thing all over the world. What's the recovery? Who are the overcomers? That's the people who get back to the pure word of God. These are people who experience what God teaches in this world, and they attach to that the theology of John Darby. If you don't accept John Darby's teaching, you are not an overcomer, and you cannot be.

Then, The Move said, "We are the overcomers." Both groups taught something called "The Ground of Unity". To be one together and to receive one another regardless of denominational differences. That is an absolute, I will use the strongest word that I have, a rape...a rape of that teaching. They taught it. They still speak it. They still teach it, and they still excommunicate one another on the basis of John Darby's teachings. Now that's not "a ground of unity". The ground of unity was Christ and Christ alone. So, the Pentecostals began to notice a lot of things that worked, and a lot of other people began noticing a lot of things that work with the Brethren, and all these things got disseminated, with some of it going this way and some of it going this way.

Now, in the Pentecostal world, there's a brother still alive, and I'm very reluctant to tell this, but I don't have any criticism of this brother, who actually is the fountain head of the present mess of anybody who is in the Pentecostal movement who claims that they're outside the institutional church, and this is what God is doing. He was an evangelist, and he had a tent as big as all get-out. He would preach and heal people, and he needed money, so he came up with an idea: if you would give, God would give you more. It was something about sowing a seed of faith: you give \$100, that's your faith, and God will give you back \$150 or \$200. Well, the Pentecostal preachers looked at that and said, "Wow." Then the Pentecostal television evangelists said, "That's a WowWee". I do not know where this positive thing came from; I have no idea, the positive gospel. There is no cross; Christ did all the suffering. Everything in the New Testament is positive. Everything is wonderful and glorious, and if anything goes wrong, you don't have enough faith, and the devil

did it. It's a very simple theology, and it's growing like weeds, and I don't personally care because that's not my world; that's not what this sword was charged with, those gimmicks.

Then another one came up: "What is your gift?" Well, we have got a sister here with some burned fingers. So, we got books on figuring out your gift, little charts and checklists, and all that. I will speak of "The Gospel Outreach" by name because it no longer exists. Gospel Outreach and Calvary Chapel were the two big things that came out of the Jesus movement, and Calvary Chapel has grown into a large...and I'm not saying this; I'm saying I respect Calvary Chapel. I really do. They have...they've been decent people. The gentleman who was with Gospel Outreach moved into a town, and they would say...and this all grew out of "the ground of unity" ... that, according to John 17, God wants us to be one, and here we are, a group of Christians, and you're a little group over there, and you come join with us, we'll join with you and we'll restore oneness. Gimmick. The whole gospel outreach movement was built on a lie. You come be with us, said the spider to the fly, said the wolf to the lamb.

Gospel outreach doesn't exist anymore. I don't know what happened to it, but the founder of Gospel Outreach came to visit me. We sat down on a bench at about 1:00 in the morning. I don't know. It was so cold. I was shaking all over, and he said to me, "Gene, what is your gift?" Because, you know, one thing is to be one. The other one is, "What's your gift?", and when you're here, you'll use it." I cannot tell you my exact words, but I can tell you what I was prepared to say because I knew he would ask. And that was, I don't know what my gift is, but whatever it is, it needs to be broken. Saints, I don't know what your gift is, but it needs to be broken, and in some cases, it probably needs to be destroyed.

There grew up another one that has been in and out of the institutional church: "the evangelization of the world in one generation". Now, I think a lot of men really, honestly, genuinely believe that we are here to evangelize the world in one generation. John Armott started it, and many others have followed because it's usable. The man who did more than anyone else in this world, who wrapped his life around that one hope and statement, was one of the finest men I ever knew, and a brother that I hold in reverence, and that was Bill Bright. He founded Campus Crusade for Christ to harness the energy and lives of college students to take the gospel to the entire world. He raised billions of dollars and trained thousands of staff to evangelize the world. However, on the day we buried him, which was last year, with all of his efforts, the Christian faith's percentage-wise number was smaller than it was the day he started. We didn't even get close to keeping up with the world's population. But it was a churchless movement. It was nothing in the world but to go out and save people.

I don't know how my Lord feels about this, but I'm going to guess that he'd rather see 100 people in His body, in His church, saved and in them, than 10,000 just saved. I may be wrong. Maybe it is worth the effort to keep people out of hell, for this thing to spread, salvation through His blood, but I can tell you this, it was never the intent of the apostles. You name me one man in the New Testament, including Peter, and every man who was ever anything, with the exception of Apollos.

Every one of those men planted churches. If you want to restore something, restore that. We have a quarter of a million, half a million men in the ministry today, and none of them are doing what first-century men did.

Now, I bring down the curtain. The year 1900, and that's ancient history. Somebody took the torch, and they knew it; they wanted to, and they had a heart burning for it, and that was Brother Watchman Nee. Now, is there anyone in this room who doesn't owe Watchman Nee something? His writings are peerless. They're wonderful; they've been a great influence. His life has been a great influence. I have lived with his work, "The Little Flock." I don't know if you know that or not, but I crossed the Pacific Ocean to live with those people and learn all I could from them. What a testimony. What a people. What a work. I put it right there, and say to you that it was God's work on this earth. But it had a few problems, saints, and you don't know these things. Mike, will you please fill in to break in here at any time and correct me if I'm wrong, add or subtract? They started their work in 1935. Now, Watchman Nee was born, I believe, in 1902. That doesn't work. He had to start earlier than that. No, no, I think I can stay with that. Yeah, I can.

It was overcoming, powerful, and in the heavens. Three things were happening in China at that time. One was a gentleman named Sun Yat-sen, who was preaching democracy for China. That was that philosophical arm. Over here on the other side was Mao Zedong, who was preaching communism, and his first cousin or his second cousin was also a military man, and they fought with one another. They were rivals in their own family, and his name was Chiang Kai-shek. I bet you didn't know that. All were born at the same time, right around the turn of the century. And then there was Watchman Nee. Thank God there was Miss Barber, too, who balanced him. He had a titanic mind, but he fell completely under the sway of the Plymouth Brethren. The Little Flock is an extension of the Brethren.

He read a book by someone named Raven, of the Brethren, called the Ravenites. The Ravenites taught, and were the first people ever to see this, and yet it's like a nose on your face: in the first century, there was only one church per city, and it wasn't a theory. There was only one church per city: to the church in Ephesus, to the church in Corinth, to the church in Laodicea, to the church in Philadelphia, to the church in Colossae, one church...the church in Jerusalem. By the way, there is one of them, one of those churches, still bears till this day its original name, one and only one, and you would never guess which one it is. It's still called the church in Rome; it's had a few minor changes, but it's never changed that name from the very beginning.

Nee came so strongly to one church per city. He also preached on the overcomers and the seven stages of the church. He also returned to the Philadelphia concept, but he really pressed the idea that we can be the Philadelphia church. He was a stronger churchman than the Brethren ever were. He spoke on the ground of unity being the city you're in, and going back and standing for that original church. There is a church in Jacksonville, Florida, and by the way, I believe the angels acknowledge that. I believe God acknowledges there was one town in this church in this city, and all the rest of us are just being stupid, running around in vain. They are redeemed, and in the

pureness of Jesus Christ, we are all just brothers and sisters because we're redeemed. I believe strongly in one church per city. But you didn't know that till I just said it.

Now, Nee was so strong on this that the people...and he preached on it so much that they got...and the overcomers, and one church per city, and the Philadelphia church, and Watchman Nee, that his followers began to say, if you do not belong to us, you're not saved. Now, I will say brother Nee repudiated that, but this I say of him, he took a long, long, long time before he repudiated it. I don't know if anybody else has observed this, so let me observe it. We have made some really big mistakes. I can tell you that most of them were done by an individual who in no way represented the church. The question is not whether we make mistakes; the question is how long you wait before you sit down and chat, kind of obliquely. And God's people are not dumb, not stupid. Most of them get the point. It's how quickly you repudiate or maybe adjust a little bit that is far, far more important than the time span, rather than what you did.

I offer you an imperfect church. I offer you an imperfect work, but I also offer you, in most cases, a short distance between here and there. And now I have to tell you that there are times when you can't do that. Let's just say here is somebody who is just doing something outrageous, and a brother comes over here, and he outrages right back. Maybe this brother is just somebody going door to door. He's not even part of the church, but he was, and this brother over here has been really jumping on his case, and then I'm asked to rebuke that brother. What will I do with that brother? If somebody can tell me what to do with that, brother, I'll sit at your feet. I don't know what to do sometimes. Sometimes I don't know what to do, because the situation is too outrageous. So, I apologize for that. I will tell you this. If you want to handle the case, anybody here unhappy with this situation, you got it. You figure it out. The only thing I would ask you to do is not judge all of us by one of us. The people in India have a saying, and that is, you can judge an entire barrel of rice by one grain. That's fine for rice. Saints, that doesn't work for Christians. We are doing what we're doing at the highest level we can, and still be fallen. Please keep that in mind.

Okay, brother Watchman Nee was so strong on locality, and it became such a doctrine, and then when you give a doctrine up here that big, you begin splitting hairs over it; for instance, they had this long discussion about what about London. So big, so far away. So, they came up with a new teaching: we'll do it by postal zip code. I'm going to try to explain something almost impossible to explain. Is that two and two, or is that just two? Just two.

He preached at Hardoon Road. A big thing; there were a lot of people there. You don't know this, but I know the people who met there. I know people who visited that place. I know the visitors and the attendees. Nee was a peerless Bible teacher and pulpiteer, and the people sat and heard him. Now, in the evening, they came together around what they called the Lord's table.

I leave you at Hardon Road; Brother Watchman Nee, one of the great expositors of the Scripture of all time among Chinese people, hated and despised by Western churches, and persecuted by them, and later annihilated by the communists, or pretty close to it. Let's talk about what was lacking, which later turned out to be a disaster that came out of it.

Audience: I want to ask about the doctrine of overcomers. How close is that tied to being moral and being righteous?

It's neither. It is whatever a man wants it to be, according to his doctrine. I have this doctrine of locality. If you join in my doctrine and practice locality, you're an overcomer. If you follow the teachings of John Darby and you accept his dispensational views, you are an overcomer. If you speak in tongues, have you ever heard of the United Pentecostal Church? Does anybody know anything about them? Do you know what their doctrine is? You have to speak in tongues to be saved. If you speak in tongues and you belong to the United Pentecostals, you are an overcomer. If you have left institutional Christianity and joined whatever group it is, then you have overcome the institutional church, and you are therefore an overcomer. It's whoever wants to corrupt the Lord. It's whatever you want it to be.

Audience: There's the other side. That's the fear factor. If you're not an overcomer, guess what? You'll spend 10,000 years in outer darkness. No joke, it's implied, but believe me, everybody gets it.